

U.S. Patent Application Serial No. **10/649,732**
Amendment filed August 15, 2007
Reply to OA dated May 16, 2007

REMARKS

Claims 12-31 and 33 are pending in this application, with claims 30 and 31 withdrawn from consideration. An amendment to claims 12, 15 and 22 is proposed herein. Upon entry of this amendment, claims 12-31 and 33 will be pending, with claims 30 and 31 withdrawn from consideration. Entry of this amendment and reconsideration of the rejections and objections are respectfully requested.

No new matter has been introduced by this Amendment. Support for the amendments to the claims is discussed below.

Claims 12-14, 16-21 and 23-29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Takita et al. [U.S. Patent No. 5,051,183] as set forth in the previous Office Action. (Office action paragraph no. 1)

Entry of the amendment to claim 12 and reconsideration of the rejection in view of this amendment are respectfully requested.

The Examiner refers to Takita et al. at column 6, lines 47-60, which refer to a solvent-removing treatment on the "thus oriented product," that is, the gel-like article after an orientation (stretching) treatment. In Takita's solvent-removing treatment, the stretched article is washed with a highly volatile solvent by extraction or spraying.

Applicant had previously argued that there was no disclosure in Takita that the solvent was **hot**. However, the Examiner now states:

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"But since the gel-like article is heated for the stretching step immediately prior to this solvent treatment, it is submitted that the solvent subsequently applied is inherently heated such that claim 12 is still readable on the reference. It appears that if claim 12 is amended to describe the condition of the solvent with regard to its temperature before contacting the gel-like article, then the claim would no longer be readable on the reference."

The Examiner appears to refer to Takita at column 6, line 65, where "the stretched article is finally dried to remove the washing solvent by a heating method," as inherently involving a hot solvent, in which the heating occurs after contact of the solvent with the stretched article.

Claim 12 has therefore been amended as suggested by the Examiner. In the present amendment to claim 12, the "treatment step with a hot solvent" is amended to be a "treatment step comprising directly bringing the gel-like formed article into contact with a hot solvent...." Support for this amendment may be found in the disclosure at page 14, 4th paragraph, of the specification, that the formed article may be "directly brought into contact with the hot solvent" (i.e., direct method).

That is, claim 12 is herein limited to the direct method. This distinguishes claim 12 from the disclosure of Takita at column 6, line 65. The claims, as amended, are therefore not anticipated by, and are not obvious over, Takita et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,051,183).

Claims 15 and 22 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. (Office action paragraph no. 2)

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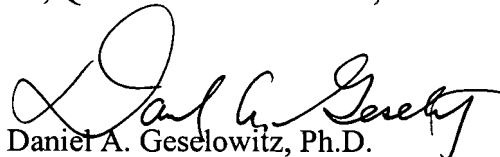
Claims 15 and 22 have each been amended to be in independent form, incorporating the limitations of base claim 12 before the present amendment. Claims 15, 22 and 33, as amended, are therefore independent of claim 12. (Applicant notes that claim 33, which depends from claim 22, was indicated as objected to in the Office action summary). Allowance of claims 15, 22 and 33 is respectfully requested.

If, for any reason, it is felt that this application is not now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the Applicant's undersigned agent at the telephone number indicated below to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this case.

In the event that this paper is not timely filed, the Applicant respectfully petitions for an appropriate extension of time. Please charge any fees for such an extension of time and any other fees which may be due with respect to this paper, to Deposit Account No. 01-2340.

Respectfully submitted,

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